

Genoa Peak Road, James Canyon Road (TY-3590)
Toiyabe National Forest, Carson Ranger District
Spooner Summit Vicinity
Douglas County
Nevada

HAER No. NV-12-D

HAER
NEV
3-SPSU.V,
1D-1

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California**

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Genoa Peak Road, James Canyon Road (TY-3590)
HAER No. NV 12-D

HAER
NEV
3-SPSU.V,
1D-

Location: Toiyabe National Forest
3 miles south/southeast of Spooner Summit on Inter-
state Highway 50
Douglas County, Nevada

U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute Glenbrook, Nevada, quadrangle,
photorevised 1992

Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates:

Zone 11, A: 252660m E, 4326360m N
B: 252620m E, 4325240m N
C: 249980m E, 4325280m N
D: 250020m E, 4326410m N

Date of Construction:
circa 1869

Engineer: Unknown

Builder: Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company
(C&TL&FCo.)

Present Owner: USDA Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Present Use: James Canyon Road

Significance: The Genoa Peak Road spur segments were part of a major log transport network associated with the Comstock mining era. This secondary spur segment in James Canyon once interconnected an elaborate network of primary and lesser skid roads. The network was the main arterial system for wood transport to Spooner Summit, the key lumberyard for the C&TL&FCo. The period of significance for this lumbering activity is 1873-1898. The spur road has retained its integrity and its overall character as a 19th century Comstock-era haul road.

Prepared By: John F. Elliott, Historian
Elliott Research Associates
P.O. Box 728
Three Rivers, California 93271

Date: July, 1996

A. Physical History

James Canyon Road was part of a complex of logging roads developed to access timber in the vicinity of Genoa Peak. This James Canyon spur road links a north and south trending network of smaller skid roads, trails, and log chutes.

The 10-foot wide roadway is a graded earthen surface, and measures 1.75 miles in length. The steeper areas contain some rock work reinforcing crossing sections. The average grade is less than six percent. It was constructed ca. 1869.

The earthen dam is located near the junction of the Spur Road Segment 3 (James Canyon Road) and Genoa Peak Road. It is downstream from the Genoa Peak Road, in the James Canyon drainage, in a climax stand of lodgepole pine.

The dam consists of a log and earth structure in a semi-circular configuration measuring approximately 200 feet in length. The site area contains associated artifacts including a wooden miter box, tin can fragments, barrel staves, milled lumber, nails, and logs.

This type of earthen dam was typical in small scale river driving. Loggers would concentrate on felling and bucking until there was sufficient stream flow to move the logs to a pick-up point. Sometimes logs were cut in early spring and skidded to the stream to await the main snowmelt. The construction of dams was an attempt to regulate stream runoff (Wilson 1992:39).

The James Canyon Cabin Sites are located south of and adjacent to James Canyon Road, one-quarter mile east of the road's junction with Genoa Peak Road. The archaeological site consists of the remains of two large cabins, a well, a tent platform, and associated artifacts.

Cabin No. One is the remains of a square-notched log structure fastened with wooden pegs. Milled lumber fragments are scattered in the vicinity. It appears to have contained two rooms; the larger of these measured 34 feet (N-S) by 13 feet (E-W). The smaller room measured 7.5 feet (N-S) by 13 feet (E-W).

Cabin No. Two is the remains of a square-notched log structure located approximately 160 feet southeast of Cabin No. One. The cabin consisted of a single room measuring 25.5 (E-W) feet by 17.5 feet (N-S). This site area also contained milled lumber fragments.

Carson range woodchoppers, both Asian and Euroamerican, lived in groups of five to 10 in the 1870s; in the 1880s the average group size was 10 to 20 (ibid.).

Chinese woodcutters exhibited a social pattern typical of the American West. They lived separately from their Euroamerican counterparts in groups of adult males, ranging in age from 17-42. The group was dominated by men in their twenties, group size varied (Lindstrom and Hall 1994:97).

Previous studies indicate that the Chinese sites inferred a cross-cultural status difference between woodcutters and lumbermen. "Lumbermen" were involved in the milling industry, while

"woodcutters" chopped and gathered wood. Lumber production was a more skilled occupation centered at the mill site, while wood cutting was more labor intensive. Chinese immigrants tended to work in the outlying areas cutting cordwood (Hill 1987:35).

B. Description

General Characteristics

The Genoa Peak Road Spur Segments are 10-foot wide graded earthen roadways approximately three miles in total length. The network of spur segments begins two miles south/southeast of Spooner Summit. Four associated historic features were also recorded as a part of this documentation.

The historical integrity of these log-hauling spur segments is excellent; roadways have survived essentially intact. In the 1950s, the Forest Service constructed waterbars for erosion control. These features consist of channels excavated across the roadbed to furnish drainage for stream runoff. The dirt from the channels was placed along the downslope side of the channel.

C. Contextual History

The Comstock mines would not have attained historical prominence without adequate sources of wood. The majority of this timber was supplied by the Tahoe Basin and the vicinity of Genoa Peak. In order to transport the logs to the Comstock district, lumber companies developed an elaborate system of roads, railroads, and flumes.

At least 80 million board feet were consumed annually during the 1870s, the peak of the excitement of the Comstock Era. The burgeoning demand for fuel wood attracted thousands of logging contractors who supplied large lumber companies.

The mines of the Comstock Lode (Virginia City, Nevada, region) are literally the tombs of the forests of the Tahoe Basin. In 1880, it was estimated that more than 600 million board feet had been buried in the Comstock mines, enough to build a town of six-room houses for 150,000 population.

The Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company established their key shipping and receiving yard at Spooner Summit. Wood was cut on the surrounding mountains. The logs were transported short runs in large wagons along haul roads. Longer distances necessitated the dragging of logsogs by team animals through chutes and on skid roads.

The Glenbrook Railroad, established in 1869, delivered lumber from the Glenbrook mills in the Spooner Summit vicinity. The Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company held a virtual monopoly over the wood and water resources of the area.

D. Proposed Alterations

Within the Genoa sale area, along the main trunk of Genoa Peak Road, some construction will be necessary. This work will include curve widening, installation of culverts for drainage, ditching, grading, and rock surfacing over a small segment. No historic sites, or artifacts were identified during the surface survey of the trunk road within the project area.

A few segments of James Canyon Road will also be reconstructed. Alterations will include the installation of drainage culvert, widening of the right-of-way to an average width of 25 feet at one corner location. Other work will include rock surfacing and straightening of portions along the initial 500 feet of the segment. One stretch of 300 feet will be relocated to protect the archaeological integrity of the James Canyon Cabin sites.

E. Sources

Knowles, Constance Darrow

1942 A History of Lumbering in the Truckee Basin. Ms. on file at Forestry Library, UC Berkeley. WPA Official Project No. 9512375, Forest Survey Division.

Lindstrom, Susan G.

1993 Determination of Eligibility and Effect for the Spooner Timber Sale on the Toiyabe National Forest. Biosystems Analysis, Inc., Santa Cruz.

Lindstrom, Susan G. and Jeffrey T. Hall

1994 Cultural Resources Inventory and Evaluation Report for the Proposed Spooner Summit and East Shore (Big Gulp) Timber Sales. Biosystems Analysis, Inc., Santa Cruz.

Olaetxe-Mallea, Jose

1992 History that Grows on Trees: The Aspen Carvings of Basque Shepherders. Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, 35 (1):21-39.

Wilson, Dick

1992 Sawdust Trails in the Truckee Basin: A History of Lumbering Operations. Nevada County Historical Society, Nevada City, California.

F. Project Information

This documentation has been prepared resultant from the signing of a memorandum of agreement (moa) between the Forest Service and the Nevada State Office of Historic Preservation. The moa was, in effect, the acknowledgement that the completion of Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation would constitute appropriate mitigation for construction activities associated with the Genoa Timber Salvage sale.

In July, 1995 field inspection and photo documentation of the project area was completed. Concurrent with the fieldwork, the USDA Forest Service contracted with Elliott Research Associates of Three Rivers, California to assist in preparing the written documentation and the final HAER submission.